



Washington University in St. Louis

SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Physician-In-Chief
Barnes-Jewish Hospital

The John Milliken Department of Medicine

Victoria J. Fraser, M.D.

Adolphus Busch Professor and Chairman

January 24, 2019

The Hon. Rodney W. Sippel

Chief Judge, United States District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri

Thomas F. Eagleton U.S. Courthouse

111 South 10th Street

St. Louis, MO 63102

Re: *United States v. Barbara Skudrzyk*

Dear Judge Sippel:

We are writing to share the impact of the crimes committed by Barbara ("Basia") Skudrzyk on the members of Washington University's Division of Medical Education.

The Division of Medical Education, which is a unit of the Department of Internal Medicine at Washington University School of Medicine, consists of approximately nine staff employees, 23 faculty members and 175 medical trainees. The Division has the important responsibility of educating medical trainees (medical students, residents and fellows) to develop the nation's workforce of physicians, medical researchers and medical educators. This training program at Washington University is one of the largest and most prestigious in the United States. Training focuses not only on acquisition of medical knowledge, but also on the social determinants of health and humanistic aspects of caring for patients.

To accomplish this latter aspect of training, the Division has built important relationships with community organizations, such as Gateway 180, the largest homeless shelter for women in Missouri; Affinia Healthcare, a federally qualified community health center; a food bank; and Casa de Salud, which provides care for refugees and immigrants with limited resources. Through these organizations, trainees engage in activities such as providing direct medical care, participating in health fairs and providing education about common health conditions and healthy lifestyles.

For 10 years, Ms. Skudrzyk was a senior administrator within the Division, which entrusted her with significant responsibilities. She began in 2010 as the Division Administrator, and in 2012 was promoted to Manager of Business Operations. In that capacity, Ms. Skudrzyk had responsibilities related to the Division's financial operations and interface with community partners. For example, she had oversight of Division staff, controlled fiscal operations and financial systems including payroll and grant fund reports, tracked and reported on financial gifts and endowment funds, and maintained internal controls. In addition, Ms. Skudrzyk served as the Division's liaison to the external community, fostering relationships with community partners.

In addition to the obvious financial impact, Ms. Skudrzyk's crimes and her abuse of the trust placed in her harmed the Division in numerous ways. The discovery, investigation and aftermath of her misconduct created an enormous disruption to the operations of the Division and the work of its employees, diverting time and resources during one of the busiest times of the year. Her fraud affected the finances and operations of important Divisional education and outreach efforts such as the Global Health Scholars

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program, which is a program designed to expand global health education during training, provide mentors and role models, and create sustainable partnerships with global colleagues to improve care for the underserved. Ms. Skudrzyk's actions have damaged the reputation of the Division and its programs as a whole, both within and outside the University community. The Department of Medicine has fielded many calls from the community, including academic and business leaders, as well as philanthropic supporters, who expressed concerns about the matter.

More importantly, Ms. Skudrzyk's crimes have had a devastating personal effect on many of her colleagues. She involved some of them unwittingly in her schemes, and falsely implicated others through forgery and false documentation. When confronted with her misconduct, she lied and attempted to place blame falsely on colleagues. Even after her termination, she contacted former co-workers, continued to lie to them, and attempted to enlist them in her defense. Many of her colleagues necessarily became involved in the investigations conducted by the University and government. Ms. Skudrzyk's conduct and its consequences created an atmosphere of fear, confusion and uncertainty that took a heavy toll on many employees. The Division twice brought in a psychologist to meet with employees suffering from the emotional trauma. Several employees considered leaving the Division, and one actually did leave because she could no longer endure the emotional and physical toll of the situation created by Ms. Skudrzyk's illegal activities.

Many Division employees remain shaken by this experience. For years they worked side by side with Ms. Skudrzyk, befriended her, supported her, trusted her – not knowing that all along she was deceiving and betraying them. It will take a long time for the Division, and particularly its people, to recover from Ms. Skudrzyk's misconduct.

Respectfully,

Victoria J. Fraser, M.D.

Adolphus Busch Professor and Chair

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Melvin S. Blanchard, M.D.

Chief, Division of Medical Education

Steven G. Reynolds

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